

STATEMENT BY

LIEUTENANT GENERAL CLYDE A. VAUGHN

DIRECTOR, ARMY NATIONAL GUARD

BEFORE THE

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ON

RECRUITING, RETENTION AND END STRENGTH OVERVIEW

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Opening Remarks

Chairwoman Davis, Ranking Member Wilson, distinguished members of the subcommittee; we appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss recruiting, retention and personnel strength of the Army National Guard on behalf of more than 366,500 Citizen Soldiers and their Families. I am pleased to report to you that both recruiting and retention in the Army National Guard are very strong. We've achieved great success through our innovative approach to recruiting and by giving the States and Territories the proper tools to meet Federal and State missions. I applaud the leadership of the Congress, governors, adjutants general, and our communities for their tremendous efforts and achievements. The Army National Guard is our nation's largest community-based defense force. We can all be extremely proud of the overwhelming response of our patriotic communities and grateful for Congressional support to our Citizen Soldiers. Congress authorized the Army National Guard end strength of 352,600 Soldiers. Because of our Strength Maintenance approach, we leveraged the successes of our recruiting programs anticipating approval of continued growth and are proud to report that as of February 2009, the Army National Guard is 366,500 Soldiers strong. Now more than ever, America needs a robust National Guard to protect the lives, property, and interest of the American people both at home and abroad.

Since we are currently above our authorized end strength and we don't have the resources to keep our strength at this level, we are taking measures to scale back our strength within our legal limit by the end of fiscal year 2009. Some of these measures include significant reduction to the enlistment and reenlistment bonuses that we were offering to the Soldiers.

One area I'm proud to report on is the increased enlistment quality marks of our Citizen-Soldiers. Today, we are exceeding all Office of Secretary of Defense (OSD) quality marks for the first time in more than a decade. Currently we are at 92% high school diploma holders, over 65% in the highest Test Skill Category (I-III A) and only 1% is in the lowest Test Skill Category (IV).

Contrast that to July 2005 where the Army National Guard had assigned strength of about 330,000 Soldiers -- significantly short of our war time requirement. With ever increasing demands for more troops we faced a critical shortage of 20,000 Soldiers below the end strength Congress authorized of 350,000. With over 37,000 Soldiers in a non-deployable status we considered ourselves to be a "hollow" --not sufficiently ready--force.

With the support of Congress we have introduced a number of innovative recruiting and training programs such as Recruit Sustainment Program (RSP) and Guard Recruiting Assistance Program (G-RAP). As a result, in February 2009, we have over 366,500 Soldiers on our rolls. Not only have we increased our strength, but we shifted from a "hollow" force to a robust and more ready force.

Army National Guard Strength for Full-Time Manning

The Army National Guard is particularly grateful for the bold action taken last year by this committee to accelerate the growth in the authorized Army National Guard strength for full-time manning. We are largely a force of part-time Citizen Soldiers and our full-time support personnel are a significant contributor to our unit readiness. Having more full-time support in our units reduces the stress on our operational force and you can be assured that every National Guardsman is grateful to this subcommittee for this extraordinary support last year.

GED Plus

The Army National Guard General Equivalency Diploma (GED) Plus program allows Non-High School Graduates who achieve an Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT) score of 31 or higher to enlist in the Army National Guard with the stipulation that they must obtain their GED prior to Initial Entry Training (IET). The course prepares the new Soldiers to pass the standardized GED test, which is administered at the end of the course. Our GED Plus pass rate was over 96% for fiscal year 2008 and currently is at 95% year to date for fiscal year 2009.

The GED Plus program has a resident school located at the National Guard Professional Education Center (PEC), on Camp Robinson, in North Little Rock, Arkansas, where we recently broke ground on a new training complex, which will accommodate approximately 7,500 students per year. Students experience both a military basic training and a structured academic environment.

Our GED Plus graduates also do very well in basic training as we emphasize physical and mental fitness throughout the program.

According to the GED Testing Program Statistical Report, 1.23 million students fail to graduate from high school each year and approximately 39 million adults in the United States (18 percent of the U.S. population) have not earned a high school diploma. The GED has the potential to qualify thousands of new recruits for enlistment in the Army National Guard. Our goal is a 95% GED pass rate and 97% Military Occupational Skill Qualification rate. Three significant initiatives are enabling that goal: the ability to obtain GED exam results within 24 to 48 hours, the implementation of a GED recycle program (giving students a second or third chance if they show the motivation and promise), and the ability to direct ship Warriors to basic training.

Recruit Sustainment Program (RSP)

The mission of the Army National Guard Recruit Sustainment Program is to ensure every Soldier departs for basic training physically fit, mentally prepared, and administratively correct. This preparation process begins upon enlistment into the ARNG with the integrated efforts of the Recruiting Force and Recruiting Sustainment Program Cadre with initial emphasis on indoctrination, expectation management, and pre-basic quality assurance. Army National Guard Soldiers are accessed through the initial Military Entrance Processing Station (MEPS) and are on active, paid drilling status while awaiting their Initial Active Duty Training ship date. They drill with their State's RSP until they depart for Basic Combat Training, then join their actual unit of assignment when they

are Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) qualified. Since instituting the RSP, the Army National Guard has experienced almost three years of consecutive at-training loss improvement.

Guard Recruiting Assistance Program (G-RAP)

The Army National Guard launched the Guard Recruiting Assistance Program (G-RAP) to achieve its accession mission, increase the number of Military Occupational Skill (MOS) qualified Soldiers and achieve Congressionally mandated end strength objectives. The Guard Recruiting Assistance Program (G-RAP) is our adaptation of civilian contract recruiting. This program capitalizes on our community based traditional Soldiers by incentivizing them to recruit their friends and contacts into Army National Guard units. By contract, these Recruiting Assistants are partially paid when a new recruit is accessed and then fully paid when the new Soldier ships to Basic Combat Training.

This program has delivered stunningly successful results for our recruiting efforts. Since its inception, this innovative program has realized over 86,900 enlistments and over 142,721 Recruiting Assistants working in partnership with the Recruiting Retention Force. Through this accession program vehicle the Army National Guard has transformed the way we conduct recruiting operations and have honed our ability to return to community based recruiting with a grassroots approach that has demonstrated the ability to immediately impact the overall personnel readiness indicators within our formations.

Active First

Active First is a pilot program designed to synchronize a Soldier's first enlistment between service in the active component and service in the Army National Guard. The total active first commitment is 8 years: three years active Army plus Variable Enlistment Length due to training requirements and about five years in the Selected Reserve (SELRES). The program applies to recruits with no prior military service who are placed in select military occupational specialties. The program launched on October 1, 2007 and has exceeded our expectations and shipped 1,611 Soldiers to training in fiscal year 2008. The fiscal year 2009 goal is 5,000. Currently 1,194 are scheduled to ship to training in fiscal year 2009 and will be accessed at the Reception Battalion upon arrival. This program is definitely worth future investment for the Army National Guard and Active Component.

Advertising Campaign

The National Guard's current advertising campaign, *Citizen-Soldier*, is a dynamic, multimedia effort to support Guard recruiting and retention by highlighting the diverse missions and opportunities in which our members are able to participate. Every effort is made to balance messaging about benefits with realistic portrayals of what it means to serve one's community and the nation. In fiscal year 2008, this campaign generated nearly 475,000 leads from interested individuals and resulted in more than 77,000 appointments made with National Guard recruiters.

Through February 2009, and for the current fiscal year, 221,000 leads have been received and 42,000 appointments with recruiters made. It is important to note that Army National Guard advertising programs are also designed to support current member retention and boost morale.

Family Programs

Some of our Family programs include the Family Assistance Centers, the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program, the Freedom Salute Program, the Strong Bonds Program, and Suicide Prevention. The Army National Guard within each state, territory, and the District of Columbia coordinates Family assistance for all military dependents within each respective location under the guidance of a State Family Program Director. The Army National Guard operates 325 Family Assistance Centers across all 54 States and Territories. The Family Assistance Centers are strategically placed in each State and Territory to overcome the geographic dispersion of both Active Army and Reserve Component Families.

The Army National Guard Yellow Ribbon Reintegration program provides information, services, referral, and proactive outreach opportunities for Soldiers, Families, employers, and youth throughout the entire deployment cycle: pre-alert, alert/pre-deployment, deployment, post-deployment, and reconstitution (reintegration). The Yellow Ribbon program is designed to benefit service members from all reserve components.

The Yellow Ribbon Reintegration program is designed to be a flexible Soldier and Family support system to meet the Soldier and Family readiness needs of geographically dispersed Families. In fiscal year 2009 to date the

Yellow Ribbon program has supported 15,929 Soldiers and 25,254 Family members at Yellow Ribbon Events. In fiscal year 2008 the Yellow Ribbon program supported over 50,000 Soldiers and over 120,000 Family members. The Army National Guard continues to expand and improve the program.

The Freedom Salute Campaign is one of the largest Army National Guard recognition endeavors in history, designed to publicly acknowledge Army National Guard Soldiers and those who supported them during the President's call to duty for Operations Noble Eagle, Enduring Freedom, and Iraqi Freedom. Each Soldier is presented an American flag in a wood display case, a Defender of Freedom certificate, a Defender of Freedom Medallion, and commemorative coins. This program has recognized over 100,000 deserving Soldiers, Family members, friends, employers, centers of influence, and other important persons. The Army National Guard leadership considers the Freedom Salute Campaign first and foremost to be a Retention Program.

The Strong Bonds Program is a unit-based, Chaplain-led process that helps Soldiers and their Families build strong relationships. This includes marital programs for married Soldiers and premarital programs for single Soldiers. Fiscal year 2008 funding provided for nearly 300 Strong Bonds events throughout the 54 States and Territories for nearly 15,000 Soldiers and their spouses.

The Army National Guard joins the rest of the nation in our sadness and shock about the alarming rate of suicides among our nation's Soldiers. The Army National Guard will join the Army in conducting a Suicide Prevention Stand

Down and a Suicide Prevention Chain Teaching in 2009. In conjunction with the National Suicide Prevention Week in September 2009, the National Guard will observe a Suicide Prevention Month. This ensures all units that drill outside the week of the national observance are able to participate. The Army National Guard is appointing and training Suicide Prevention Program Managers (SPPMs) at every state and Suicide Intervention Officers (SIOs) at every company nationwide. The Army National Guard will conduct a comprehensive and professional suicide prevention training program for Suicide Prevention Program Managers and support personnel later this month (March 2009). This is the third training in 12 months with 100 percent of our personnel scheduled to attend. Each State and Territory has hired or is in the process of hiring a Director of Psychological Health (DPH) who will provide case management and resourcing support for Soldiers in crisis.

The Personnel Blast Contaminant Tracker

The Personnel Blast Contaminant Tracker is a sub-module of the Line of Duty (LOD) module within the Medical Operational Data System (MODS). The LOD module is a personnel and medical application used by the 54 States and Territories. This sub-module serves as a personnel recording system for all service members (regardless of branch or component) that were involved in blast incidents and other significant events of interest, even in absence of immediate physical symptoms. This program once finally approved and implemented would include a record of those who were near a blast but do not appear to be injured, but might suffer at a future time with a post-traumatic injuries.

Mild traumatic brain injury (TBI) may affect from 10 to 20 percent of Soldiers redeploying from combat in Iraq and Afghanistan. More than 90 percent of Soldiers with TBI recover quickly. Many Soldiers experience temporary symptoms of more severe problems and may not know why they have them. Often after a head injury Soldiers typically think they're okay, yet they've actually had an injury that needs attention. Medical attention involves evaluation and education for Soldiers and Family members as well as early and appropriate treatment for the symptoms. The most important thing to do is to allow time to heal. Recovery is usually quick, but the time greatly depends on the nature of the injury.

The Army National Guard established the Soldier Family Support and Services division to support and assist state-level programs.

Closing Remarks

Given the threats our nation faces at home and abroad, and a similar operating environment projected for the future, a robust Army National Guard is essential to the security of the American people. Thanks to the support of the Congress in the past and some innovative new thinking and new approaches in the Army National Guard's recruiting, your Army National Guard is experiencing historical recruiting success. We will continue focusing on the retention programs already mentioned to maintain our authorized end strength. Patriotic Americans are joining and staying in the Army National Guard in record numbers. The Army National Guard provides unique support to our nation. Through these innovative programs and adequate funding and authority, the Army National Guard will continue to focus on Personnel Readiness and continue to increase our readiness and strength.

I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today and invite your questions and comments.